

okay, you guys, admittedly i don't have much
of a backhand right at foosball,

and admittedly i could never line up longshots
over the rims of my spectacles at pool,

and admittedly i have a tendency to become absorbed in
an activity,
burn it and myself out, and turn to something else,

but back in '64-'65,
when little anthony was in his prime,
when blacks and whites marched arm-in-arm for selma,
when at garfono's pizza parlor on friday afternoons,
no one cared if i danced with black girls,
nor did i care if they danced with whites,
when al jefferson used to put me up if my wife threw me
out
and ted short taught me how to lose six bets on one race
at santa anita,

back there, for one brief shining moment as they say in
camelot
for one year about which i have never satisfactorily
written

take my word for it, i was one hell of a nigger.

LITERATURE AND LIFE

There is a scene in Under the Volcano
which I have always found incomparably high comedy
because it is tragedy as well.
The Consul, rising from a couple of hours sleep
and still half-schnocked,
finds a note from his wife informing him she has cut
out for good.

He tosses it aside, literally digs up a bottle from
the yard,
and after a timeless period of getting straight,
wanders back inside musing something like,
"I wonder where she's gone? Probably out to get some
groceries?"

To properly appreciate this scene you must understand
that he is passionately in love with his wife
(yes, I realize that isn't easy to fathom)
that she is the only thing that he had left.

Last week, after four days spent if not under a volcano,
then let's say somewhere in the foothills,
I awoke feeling pretty good,
knowing there would be no need for a drink,
and came upon a couple of unopened manilla envelopes,
manuscripts returned from magazines.
Now, again, to appreciate this you must understand
that those envelopes are to me what the Consul's wife
was to him: I live for them, I have sacrificed
important segments of my own life and the lives
of my loved ones to those seemingly innocuous manilla
envelopes.
Yet I could not remember having taken them from the
mailbox or having tossed them aside.

There are some books you would rather admire than live.

MASTER OF ARTS

After the seminar he comes to me and asks,
"These other people in the class
all seem to have heard of these authors that you're
mentioning --
what are they, a bunch of bookworms or something?"

THE PROGRESS OF THE WOMEN'S MOVEMENT

My wife tells me that my daughter
who used to want to grow up
to be a writer and to work in a bookstore
has now decided to be a writer
and to own a bookstore.

THE BEST YEARS OF OUR LIVES

i was asked once in an interview
what were my greatest fears.
i replied that, among other things,
i feared the return of my teenage acne.

now i have always believed in the power
of negative thinking -- that, by anticipating the
worst,
you can sort of ward it off.